

A medieval manuscript illumination depicting Saint Augustine in a garden. Saint Augustine is shown kneeling in prayer, wearing a red robe and a halo, with his hands clasped in front of his face. He is positioned in the center of the frame, under a large, leafy tree. To the left, a pink building with a blue roof is visible. To the right, a white building with a red roof and a small arched window is shown. The garden is filled with various plants, flowers, and a small wooden fence in the foreground. The overall style is characteristic of medieval manuscript art, with vibrant colors and detailed foliage.

CONFESSING WITH SAINT AUGUSTINE

HPRS5094/6094

Dr Angus M Slater



1 – APPROACHING AUGUSTINE

ST. AUGUSTINE (354-430)

Born in Roman North Africa.

Professor of rhetoric in Milan

Conversion: 386

Ordination u Bishop of Hippo

Theologian, Latin Church Father

Works: Confessions, The City of God, On the Trinity, commentaries, treatises, sermons, letters

Doctor of the Church

Feast day: 28 August. Patron saint of brewers, printers and theologians.



ST. AUGUSTINE (354-430)

The earliest known portrait of St Augustine.

FRESCO, LATERAN, ROME. 6TH C.



PORTRAYALS OF AUGUSTINE FROM LATE ANTIQUITY TO MODERNITY

Possidius, The Life of Saint Augustine (Sancti Augustini Vita), 5th c.

Possidius of Calama— Augustine's friend; fellow bishop

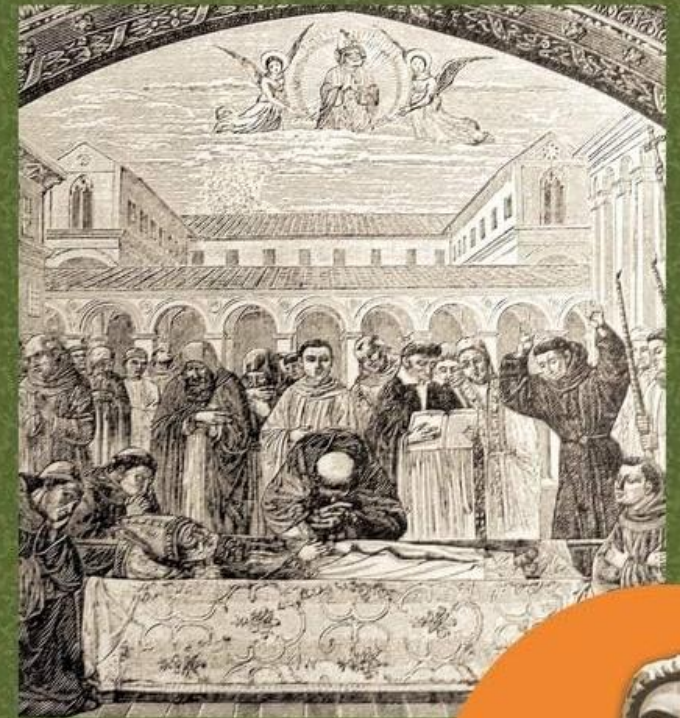
An “affectionate portrait of a friend and mentor.”
(Schiavo, 2008, iii)

Possidius emphasises Augustine's intellect, oratorical gifts, and his daily life as a bishop.

One of the main sources of Augustine's life besides Confessions

The Life of Saint Augustine

A Translation of the *Sancti Augustini Vita*
by Possidius, Bishop of Calama



translated by
Herbert T. Weiskotten

CHRISTIAN ROMAN EMPIRE SERIES, VOL. 6

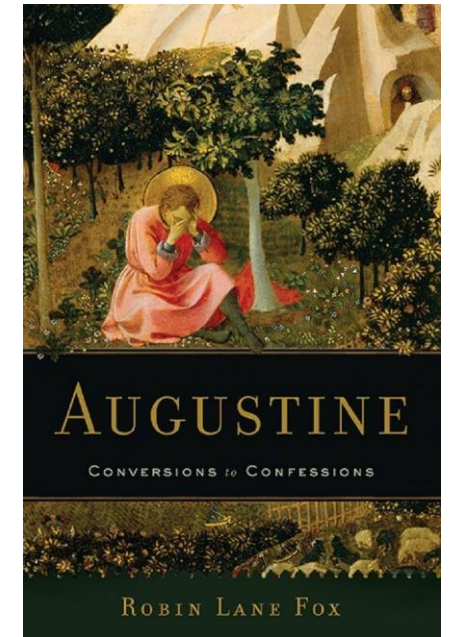
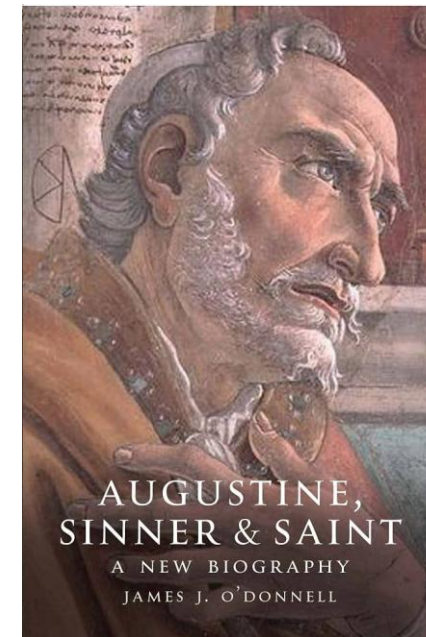
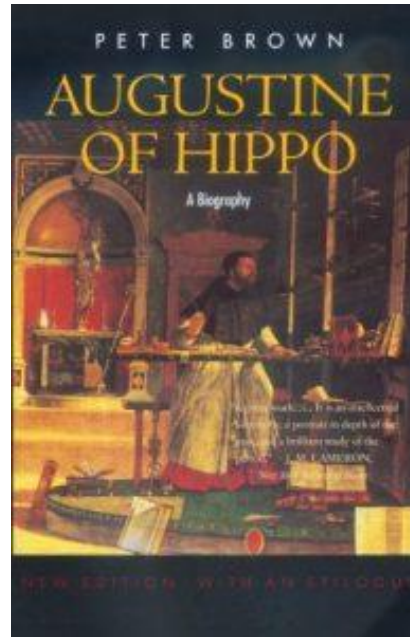


Modern biographies

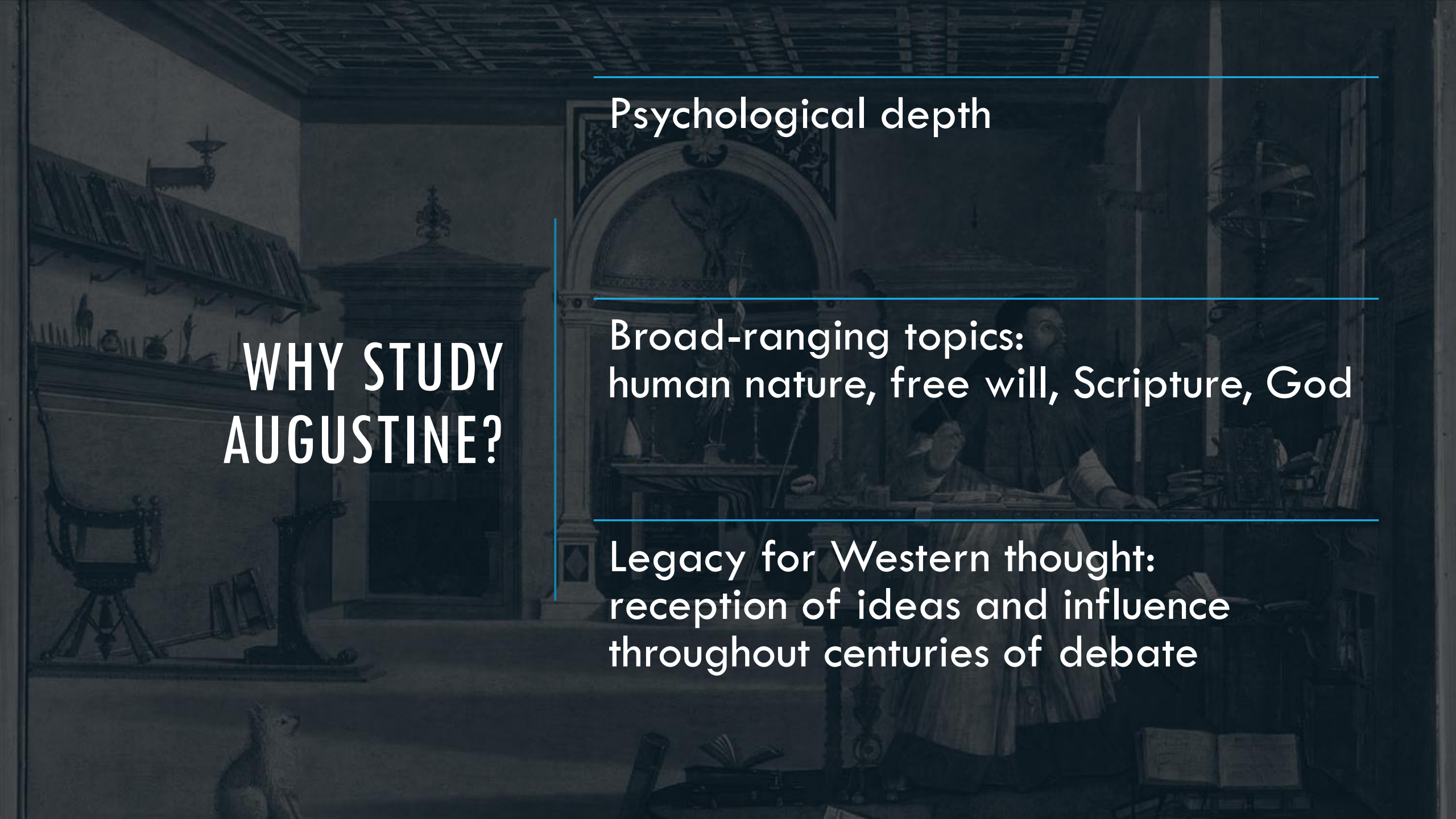
Peter Brown, Augustine of Hippo
(1967; 2000)

James O'Donnell, Augustine: A
New Biography (2005)

Robin Lane Fox, Augustine:
Conversions to Confessions (2015)



PORTRAYALS OF AUGUSTINE FROM
LATE ANTIQUITY TO MODERNITY

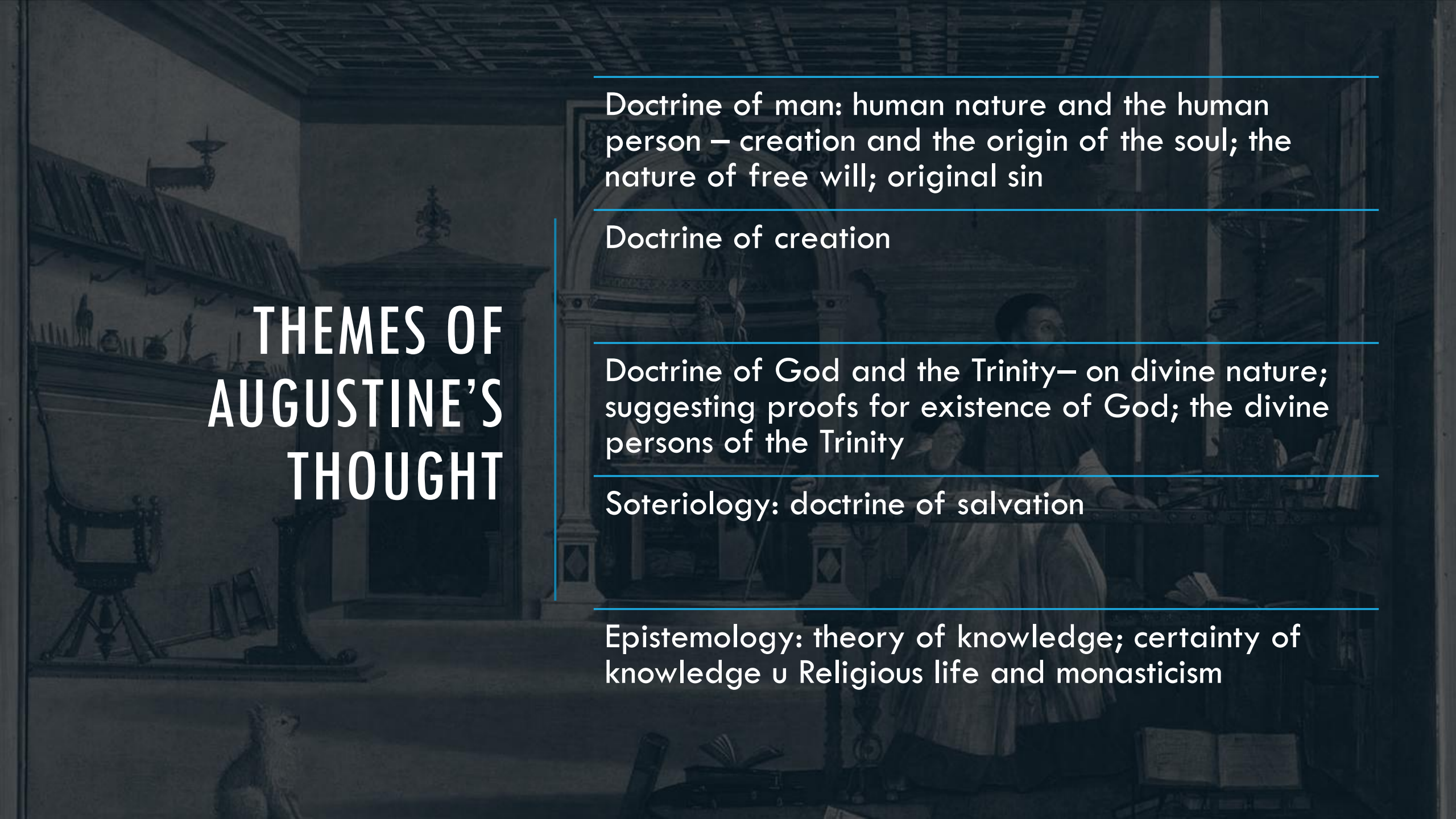


WHY STUDY AUGUSTINE?

Psychological depth

Broad-ranging topics:
human nature, free will, Scripture, God

Legacy for Western thought:
reception of ideas and influence
throughout centuries of debate



THEMES OF AUGUSTINE'S THOUGHT

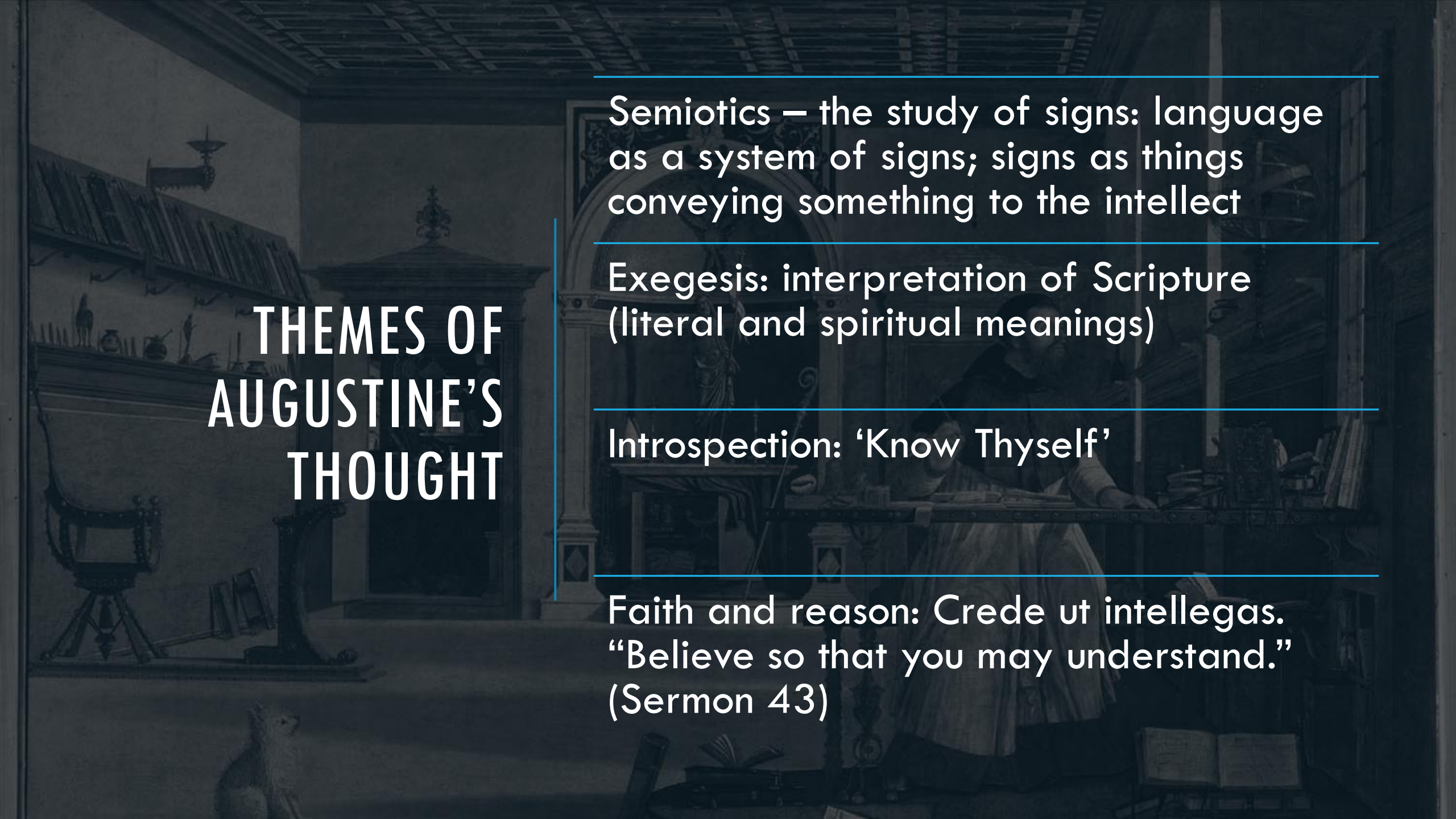
Doctrine of man: human nature and the human person – creation and the origin of the soul; the nature of free will; original sin

Doctrine of creation

Doctrine of God and the Trinity— on divine nature; suggesting proofs for existence of God; the divine persons of the Trinity

Soteriology: doctrine of salvation

Epistemology: theory of knowledge; certainty of knowledge u Religious life and monasticism



THEMES OF AUGUSTINE'S THOUGHT

Semiotics — the study of signs: language as a system of signs; signs as things conveying something to the intellect

Exegesis: interpretation of Scripture (literal and spiritual meanings)

Introspection: 'Know Thyself'

Faith and reason: *Crede ut intellegas.*
“Believe so that you may understand.”
(Sermon 43)

AUGUSTINE'S THEOLOGY: EMPHASES AND CHARACTERISTICS

Experiential

Rationality; conveys a sense of the created world marked by mathematical order

Illumination – divine illumination of the mind

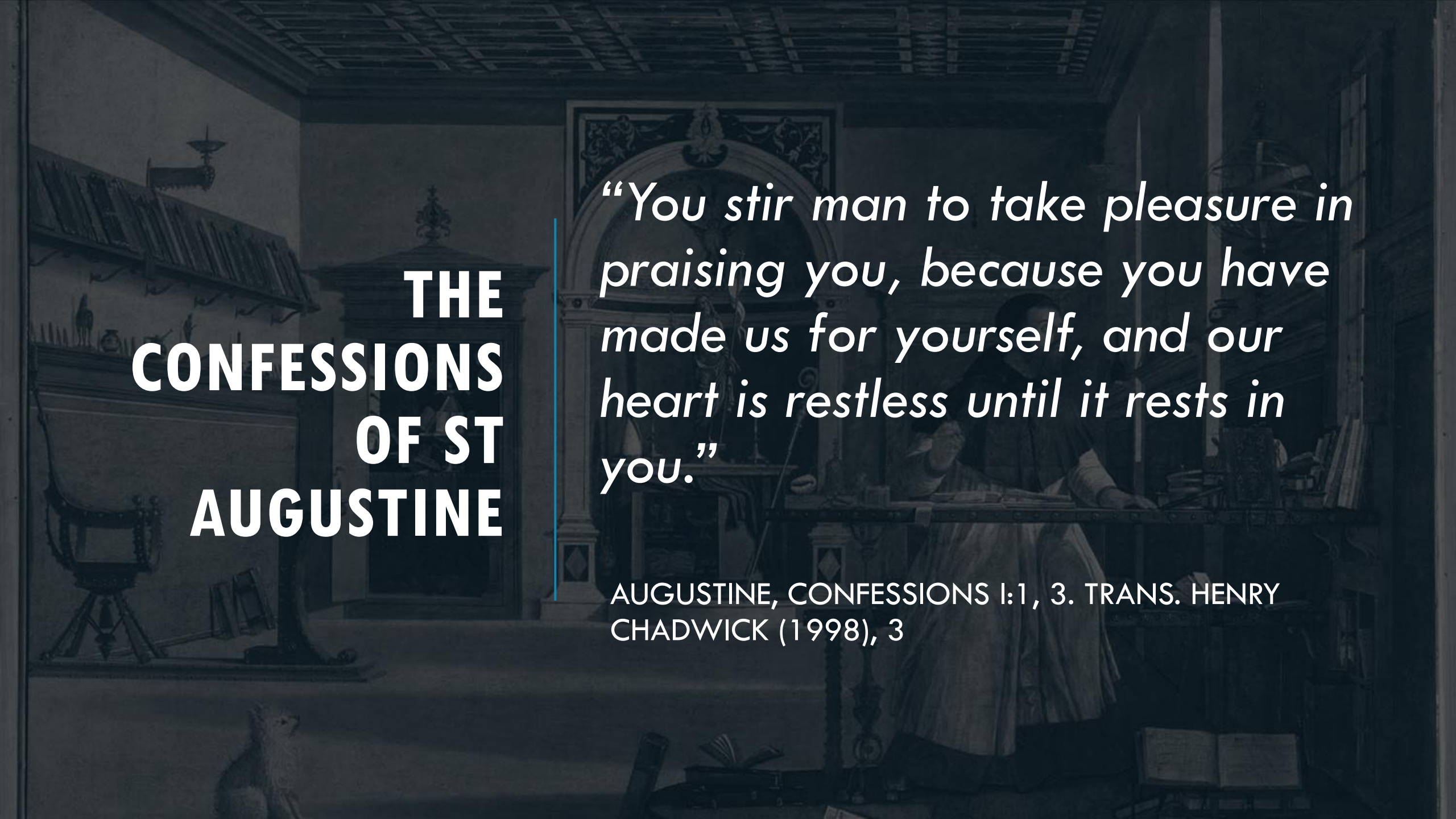
Revisions in writing

Enquiry; aporetic (expressing doubt)





THE CONFESSIONS OF ST AUGUSTINE



THE CONFESSIONS OF ST AUGUSTINE

*“You stir man to take pleasure in
praising you, because you have
made us for yourself, and our
heart is restless until it rests in
you.”*

AUGUSTINE, CONFESSIONS 1:1, 3. TRANS. HENRY
CHADWICK (1998), 3

COMPOSITION, STRUCTURE, THEMES

Written ca. 397-400

Response to criticism; possible connection with Paulinus of Nola (interested in Augustine's biography)

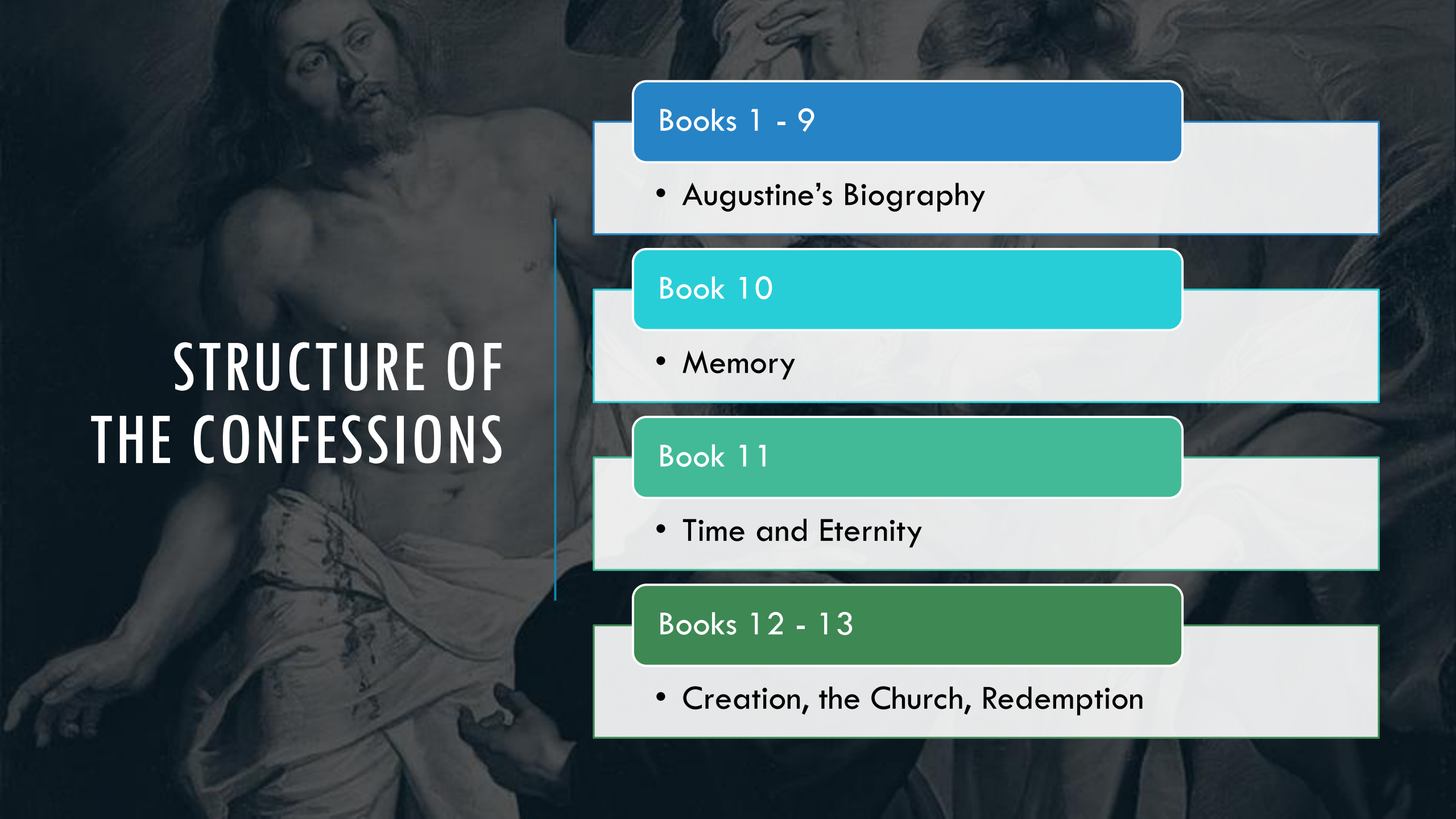
Augustine: the work "[serves] to excite the human mind and affection towards God"

"Confession" – Latin, confessio = confession, of guilt; avowal of belief/faith; praise; thanksgiving

Layers of autobiography – "even the apparently simple autobiographical narrative often carries harmonics of deeper meaning." (Chadwick, 1998, ix)

Elaborate rhetorical style





STRUCTURE OF THE CONFESSIONS

Books 1 - 9

- Augustine's Biography

Book 10

- Memory

Book 11

- Time and Eternity

Books 12 - 13

- Creation, the Church, Redemption

AUGUSTINE,
CONFESSIONS
10:3.4-4.6
(CHADWICK, PP.
180-182)

“So what profit is there [...] when to human readers, by this book I confess to you who I now am, not what I once was? [...]

A brotherly mind will love in me what you teach to be lovable, and will regret in me what you teach to be regrettable. [...]

I am making this confession not only before you with a secret exaltation and fear and with a secret grief touched by hope, but also in the ears of believing sons of men, sharers in my joy, conjoined with me in mortality, my fellow citizens and pilgrims. [...]

You have commanded me to serve them if I wish to live with you and in dependence on you [.] [...] So to those whom you command me to serve, I will reveal not who I was, but what I have now come to be and what I continue to be. [...] It is in this spirit that I ask to be listened to.”

KEY THEMES

Description of conversion – stages or moments of conversion

Insight into human desire, memory and introspection

Assessment of the culture of the Roman Empire (mythology, literature, entertainment)

Theological discussions of divine transcendence and eternity

Experience of mystical vision (vision at Ostia, Book 9)

Relationships with others – Monica, Ambrose, Adeodatus, friends

God-self relationship





THE CONTEXT OF THE LATE ROMAN EMPIRE



THE CONTEXT OF THE LATE ROMAN EMPIRE

- **AD 0:** The Roman Empire, established by Augustus, dominates the Mediterranean world, providing the political and cultural context for the emergence of Christianity.
- **AD 30–33:** The ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus take place in the Roman province of Judaea under Roman rule.
- **AD 64:** Following the Great Fire of Rome, Emperor Nero blames Christians, initiating one of the first imperial persecutions.
- **AD 66–73:** The First Jewish Revolt culminates in the destruction of the Second Temple in AD 70, profoundly shaping both Judaism and Christianity.



THE CONTEXT OF THE LATE ROMAN EMPIRE

- **AD 96–180:** During the reigns of the "Five Good Emperors," the Empire reaches the height of its stability and territorial extent, while Christianity spreads across the Mediterranean.

- **Third century (AD 235–284):** The Empire experiences the Crisis of the Third Century, marked by civil war, economic instability, invasions, and political fragmentation.

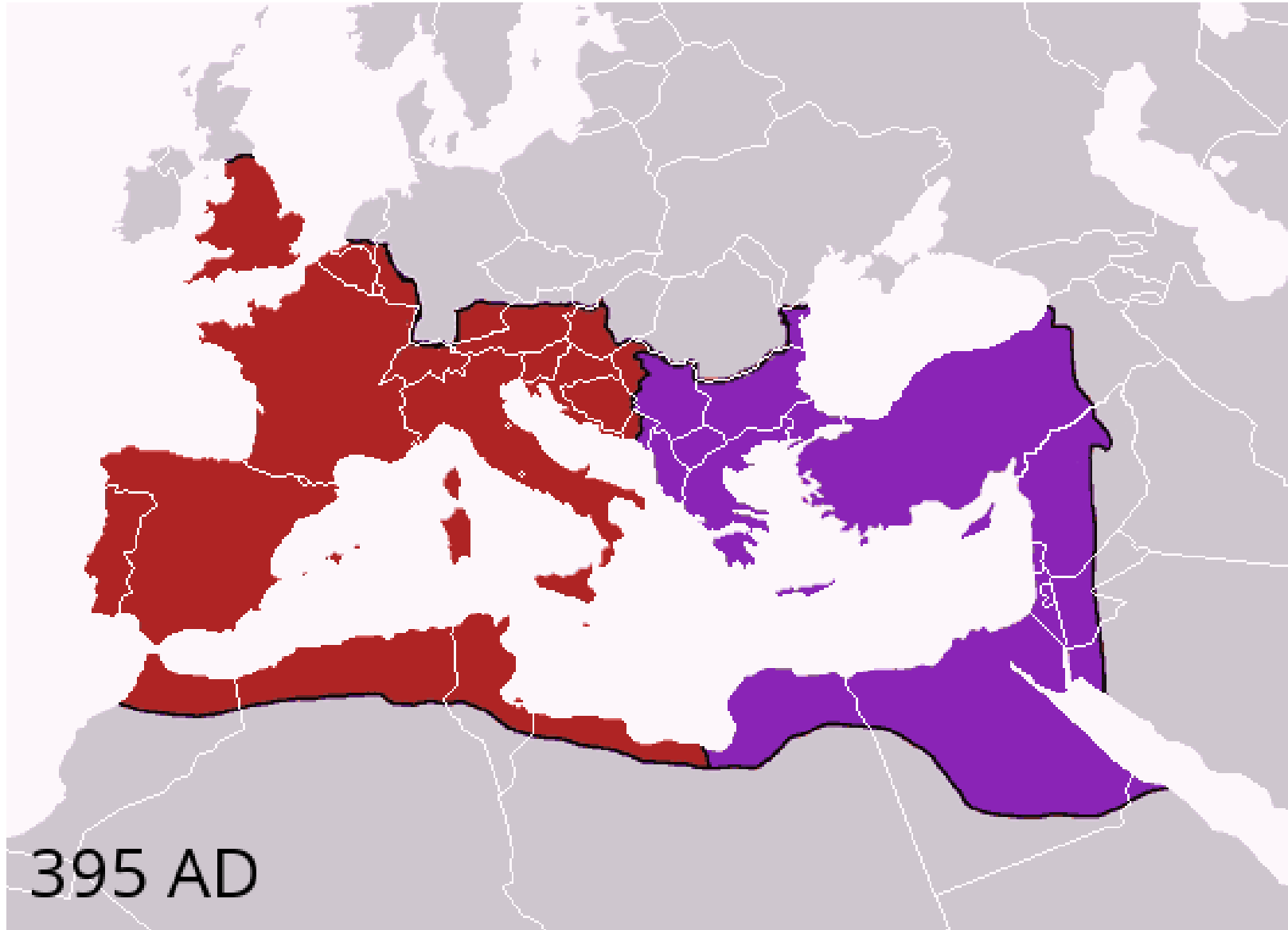
- **AD 250–303:** Periodic imperial persecutions of Christians occur, culminating in the **Great Persecution** under Diocletian.

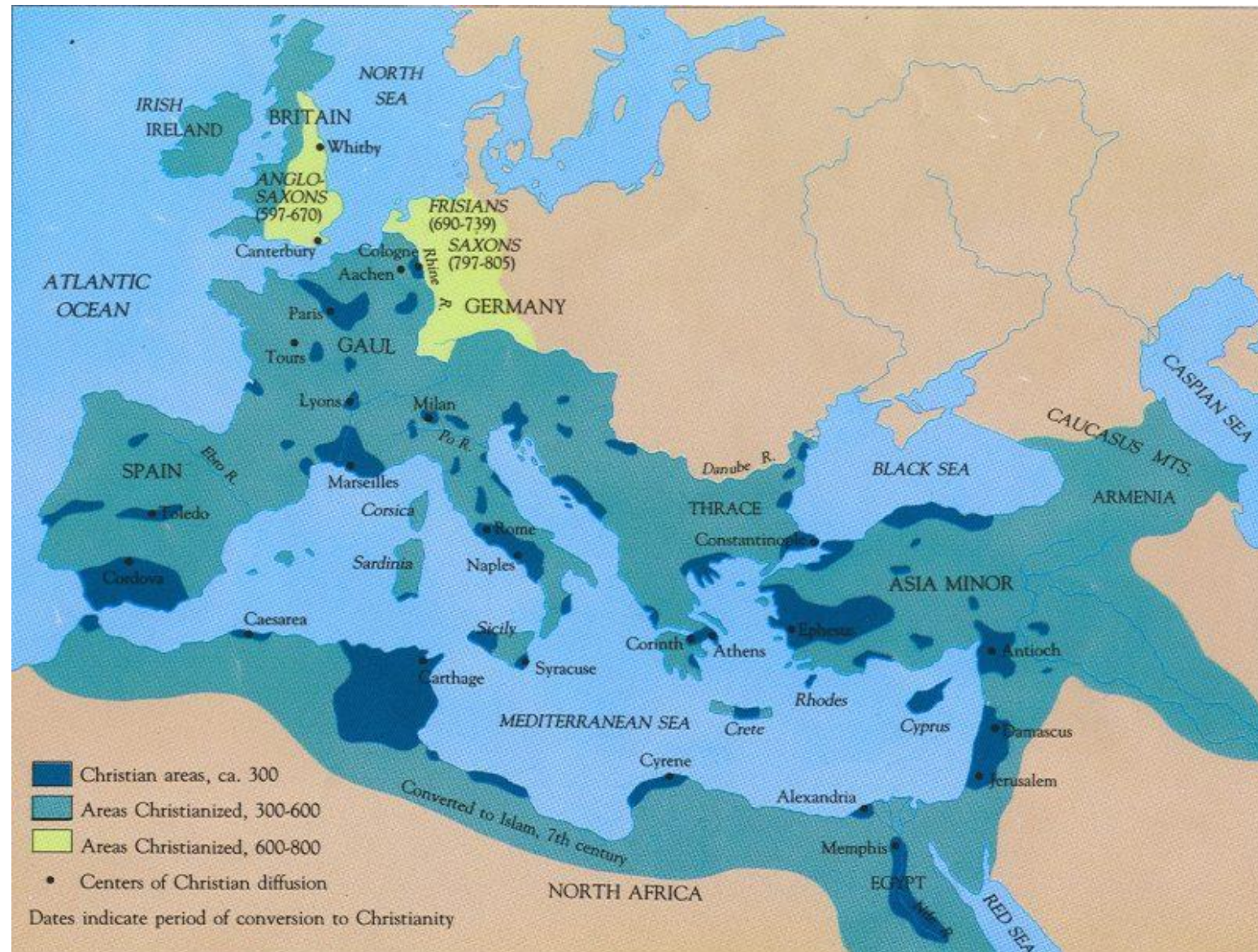
- **AD 284–305:** Diocletian reforms the Empire through administrative and military reorganisation, including the establishment of the Tetrarchy.

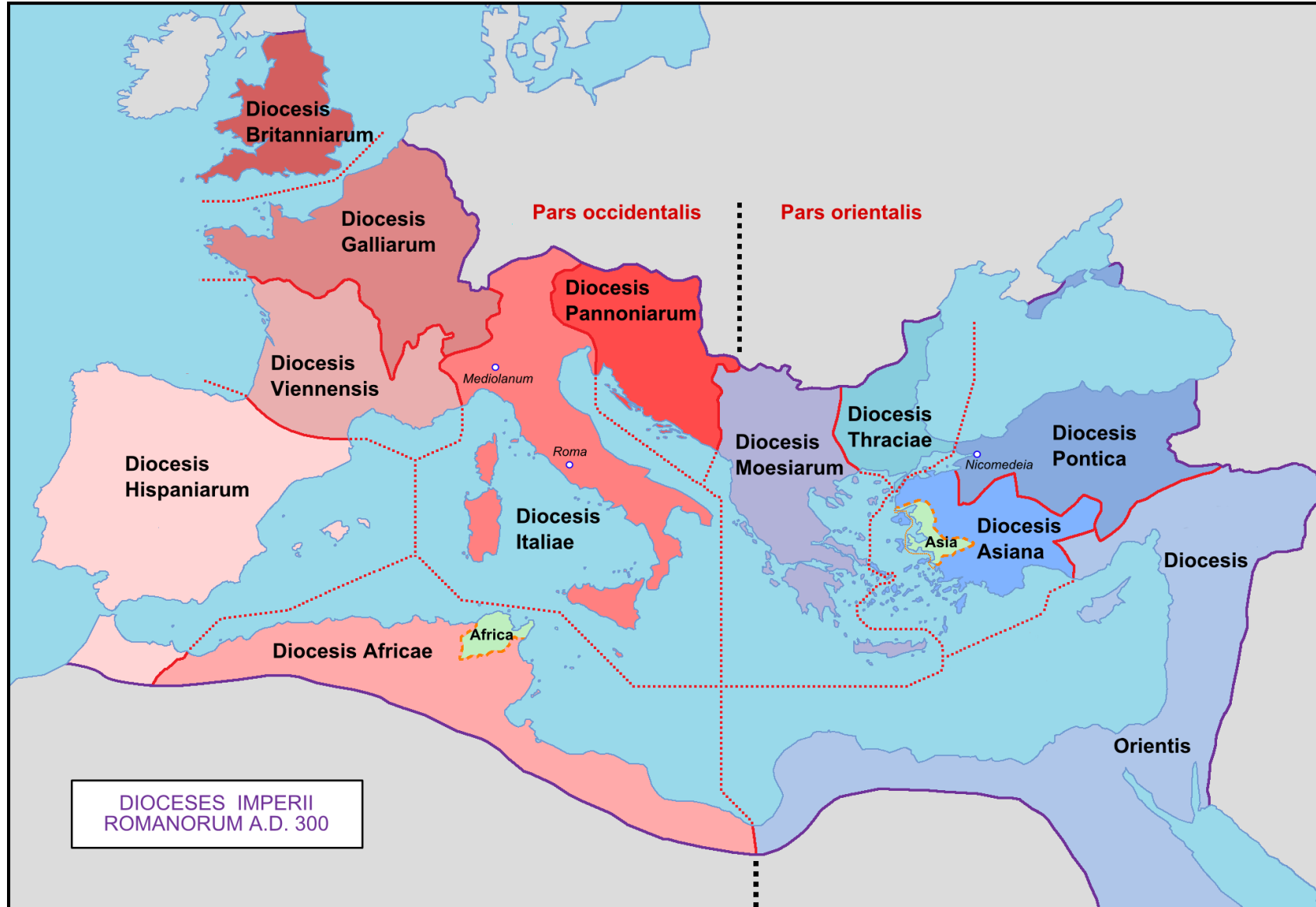


THE CONTEXT OF THE LATE ROMAN EMPIRE

- **AD 312–313:** Constantine the Great wins the Battle of the Milvian Bridge and, through the Edict of Milan, grants legal status and toleration to Christianity.
- **AD 325:** Constantine convenes the First Council of Nicaea, marking the beginning of direct imperial involvement in defining Christian orthodoxy.
- **AD 330–380:** Constantinople becomes the new imperial capital, and Christianity increasingly becomes intertwined with imperial government.
- **AD 380–395:** Under Theodosius I, Nicene Christianity becomes the official religion of the Empire, pagan worship is increasingly restricted, and upon his death in AD 395 the Empire is permanently divided into Eastern and Western halves.







READING

Confessions, Book I
Confessions, Book II

BONNER, G. (2007). *Freedom and Necessity: St. Augustine's Teaching on Divine Power and Human Freedom*. Catholic University of America Press.

ORTIZ, J. (2016). *You Made Us for Yourself: Creation in St. Augustines Confessions*. Augsburg Fortress

